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BETWEEN THE UPPER
AND THE NETHER
MILL-STONES

By "A. B. C."

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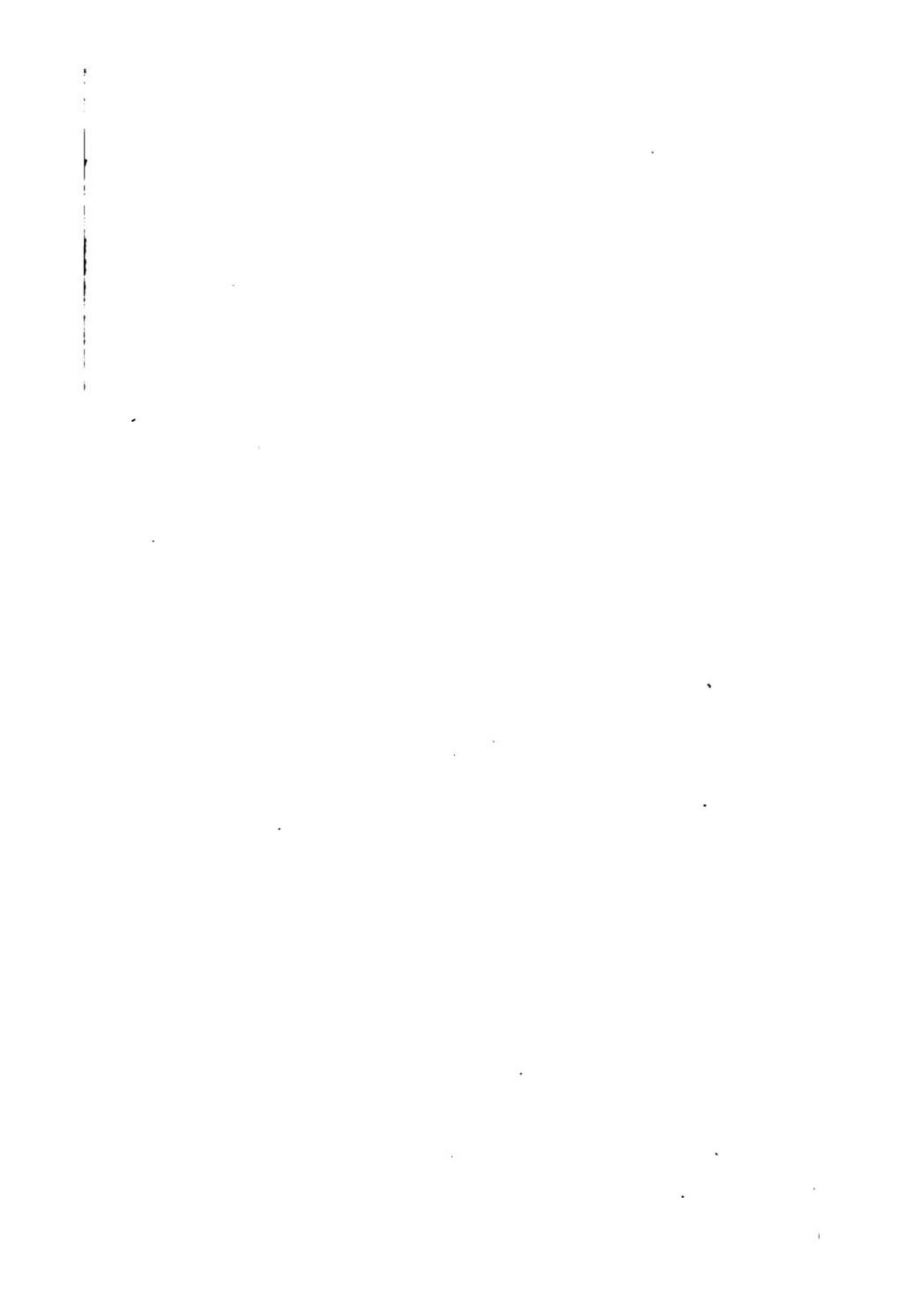
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FROM

President's Office

Apropos of the
Harvard Drive

August 1, 1919.



BETWEEN THE UPPER
AND THE NETHER
MILL-STONES

BY "A. B. C."

ANNIE CROSBY BUNKER

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BETWEEN THE UPPER AND THE
NETHER MILL-STONES.

By "A. B. C." ANNIE CROSBY BUNKER

I.

WHAT is the position of the middle class today? It stands just between the upper and the nether mill-stones and is ground down by capital on the one hand and labor on the other. By the middle class here is meant chiefly the educated middle class, those who are trained, not for manual labor, but for brain work. The skilled mechanic may be grouped in the middle class by some, but really he belongs in the labor group—as he has formed unions and can force his demands for salary and hours upon the public. The real middle class consists of the clerks, salesmen, teachers, doctors, lawyers, ministers—people who today stand very little chance of rising above their present positions or of making any money.

For the last sixty years these unfortunate conditions have been developing. Before that time large fortunes were very rare in this country. A man who left fifty to a hundred thousand dollars when he died was considered very wealthy—and was mentioned in the newspapers as a "merchant prince." The

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line of demarcation between the classes in the North was not great—although there existed as always the three classes, upper, middle and lower. Manual labor was not regarded as degrading except in the South where negro slaves did the work. A good common school education was free to all in the North and gave basis for growth and success in the world. Men of higher education, like lawyers, ministers, doctors, and teachers, had a high standing in the community and were respected by rich and poor. And the conditions of life were such that men of intellectual attainments had a fair chance for earning a good living and of giving their children good homes and good education. Then all were Americans. America was the land of the free, the land of equality, the land of opportunity. Pride of family to be sure had considerable influence in the South and even in some sections of the North, but the West was on a more democratic basis and was leavening the whole lump. Life was simple and serene compared with the life of today. And what caused the change? No one thing is responsible for it,—the causes are many. The great waves of immigration, the rise of corporations, the formation of labor unions, the numerous inventions, the growth of commerce, were all important factors in plunging us into

the world struggle of classes and the contest for wealth that has put the middle class into the position it occupies today.

Immigration brought to our shores millions of uneducated foreigners who have affected our economic and political conditions tremendously. They were generally not fitted or trained for any form of labor, but many were peasants. Strangely enough their inclination was not for the farm but for the city. Then they became the day laborers and later mechanics, and played a great part in the building of roads, in factory work, and in other lines contributing to the upbuilding of the country. But gradually the feeling grew up among Americans that manual labor was degrading. The boys did not want to work on the streets, in gardens, as skilled mechanics. They did not want to mix with these uneducated foreigners, and so they preferred to be bookkeepers, stenographers, salesmen, clerks behind the counter, and for a while they got better wages than they could as laborers or mechanics. And where do they stand today? Between the upper and the nether mill-stones. Big business firms used to pay expert bookkeepers large salaries, but the tendency of the last twenty-five years has been to decrease those salaries pretty steadily. Many a man has found himself out of em-

ployment at middle age—not because he was incompetent but because the firm wanted to make more money and could hire bookkeepers cheaper now—boys or even girls just out of schools or business colleges. Could they do as good work as the older, experienced man? No indeed, but they knew how to keep books and a few mistakes now and then would not make much difference, as the firms were coining money anyway. And what could the discharged bookkeeper get to do to earn his living? Not much of anything. He was too old to learn something new and so he had to pick up anything he could get. If he belonged to a labor union, he could not have been discharged or his salary decreased.

What about the stenographers? At first the young men who studied phonography and typewriting got good positions with good pay. It seemed so good that many took it up and the public schools taught it—and then boys and girls swarmed out every year eagerly looking for positions. And they generally find them—even today—but not at so high wages as when there were fewer of them. But they have no union either, so take what they can get. On the whole the girls get positions of this sort more easily than the boys, because employers think the boys will want higher wages after a time and they can keep

the girls for less. Girls just out of high schools can generally earn more than the boys. It takes the boys much longer to get into any position that pays a living wage.

The man behind the counter who in times gone by earned \$12 to \$18 a week could get married and hope for an increase in salary. He may get a little more than that now, but the increased salary has not kept pace with the increased cost of living—lags far behind—and so generally he does not marry. If he does, his wife works too—and they decide not to have children because they cannot afford to bring them up. And that is true, they cannot. Floor walkers in many of the big department stores only get \$20 or \$25 a week. The general story is that there has been very slight increase in salaries of men as clerks and salesmen in the last twenty years. Recall the well mannered, neatly dressed salesmen in shoe stores for instance. They are always polite and attentive to customers, and with infinite patience try on shoe after shoe, climb up to shelves to get another size, sit down again, and so on steadily most of the day. And their weekly wage is from \$15 to \$25—even in stores that do a business of from one million to two million dollars a year. How discouraged such men must be when they know that the uneducated and poorly dressed day labor-

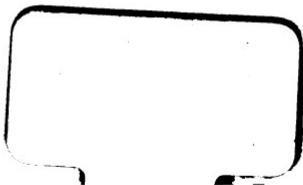
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FROM

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one for the purpose by using two small, flat pieces of wood to lift into a high wagon what the winds have left. This hardly seems like work to the man who has been on the jump all day selling goods or keeping accounts. And yet the laborer receives almost as much compensation and is not expected to be efficient.

II.

THE girl in the store gets more than she used to—so they say—but what does it amount to? She has to pay so much more for everything—and the demands of life are greater. Apropos of increased wages, here is an incident. Two years ago just after the outbreak of the great war, a large corporation, unable to get supplies from Germany, discharged many clerks and stenographers. One of these stenographers who had been receiving a salary of \$10 a week tried for another place, but everywhere found the same story that they were turning off rather than taking on. At last she went to a well-known shoe factory where they had advertised for a stenographer. She was told that the place was already filled but they would employ her as an operative in the factory. She took the job. The salary was not settled as they told her that it would depend on what she did—that many of the girls earned \$10 a week and that she could undoubtedly do so soon. Her hours were from 7.30 A. M. to 5 P. M., and she worked steadily every minute. The girls were not allowed to speak to one another or waste a second. She was an American girl of good education, twenty-five years of age, bright and capable. She did not fancy her associates, as they were chiefly foreigners, were

not very clean, and not educated, and at the noon hour talked in a very vulgar, common way. At the end of the week she received just \$4.00 with the patronizing, cheering remark, "You will get more next time." The next week she got the same. On talking matters over with the other girls, she found just one woman of thirty who had been there several years who was earning \$10—most earned \$4 to \$6. When at the end of the third week, she received the same, she went to the man who hired her. "Well," he said, when she told him all she had learned, "You've got to make good, you know. But then you can throw up the job. There are plenty waiting for it." And she gave it up because she said \$4 did not pay her car fares and the wear and tear on her clothes. And how about the minimum wage law?

How absurd it is when these rich women who are interested in social service, set to work to investigate conditions under which girls work and live, and finally come out with a report that a girl can live decently on \$6.00 a week and be perfectly good. Would that they could be made to try it and "eat their words." They certainly would not get anything else to eat. Of course if a girl lives at home and her father is able to give her her board, she may be able to pay her car fares,

buy her lunches and pay for the clothes she is obliged to have and keep her position. Possibly she can go to the movies and buy an ice cream soda now and then. But is that living?

And these same rich women pay to their domestic servants \$8 and more a week. Many a girl who has only been in this country a very few years, who has no education and no training for her work except what she has picked up in service, can go into these families as second girl or parlor girl at \$8, or cook at \$10 a week. And what does that mean? Why, that she earns more than girls specially trained and educated for their work.

A few weeks ago a girl of twenty-six, educated in the high school and later in college for a secretarial course—who fills a secretarial position in an educational institution, came home to hear from her mother (a widow), that the general housework girl was going to leave because a kind neighbor had offered her \$8 a week instead of the \$6 that she was giving. The young lady was earning \$13 a week and had been paying her mother six for her board and that had paid the maid. The younger brother after several years of hard work was only earning \$10 a week. The mother was not well and not able to do much work. It was out of the question to pay more than \$6 to a maid—especially as she had

to hire a woman one day a week to do the washing at \$1.50 and car fares. And yet where could she get another maid? Now the girls do not want to do general house work. If they do, they want \$7 or \$8 a week; they want the employer to hire all the washing, or at least the flat work; they do not wish to make beds; they want to rest every afternoon from two to five (while the mistress answers calls at door and telephone;) they want to have dinner at 6.30 so they can get out every evening to go to the movies, or dances, or to their friends by 8 P. M.; they want every Thursday and Sunday afternoon and evening; they hope you do not have much company; they want to use the telephone and call up or be called any time of the day right in the midst of their work and sit and chat for ten or fifteen minutes. If they ever do stay in of an evening, they have callers and always treat them to your cake and tea or coffee. They want to take life comfortably and do as little as possible. If you object, they call you mean or hard hearted, say you want to make slaves of them, and leave to get a place that is a "snap" or a "cinch."

Take this incident of the maid and the stenographer and see how much more the maid gets out of life under present day conditions. The stenographer paid \$6 a week

board and had \$7 left. Out of that she had to pay car fares six days in a week, she either had to buy a lunch or else take a cold lunch from home, she had to wear good clothes kept in proper order so that she could appear neat and presentable in order to retain her position. She left home at eight, rain or shine, to reach her place of business at nine. From nine to twelve, she worked steadily—no running to talk at telephone, no going into the neighbor's yard to talk with the girl. Back from lunch at one to work at the same rate until five—then home in crowded cars usually standing up hanging on to a strap most of the way. When through dinner she was really too tired to go out, but of course she went some evenings until she found that she could not do it and keep on doing good work—so in the end she had to limit herself to one evening in the week beside Saturday.

III.

TAKE the teachers of the children. What more important and responsible work is there in the world to be done? Yet teachers are not paid as well as housemaids and cooks. To begin with, a teacher has to spend years in study and training, and the tendency of late years has been to increase not only the length of time spent in training but also the requirements. Her salary is small at first and increases slowly even in large cities. She cannot leave one place at any time she feels like it, and get another with increased wages and without any recommendation of efficiency as the maid does. She would soon be out of employment if she were inefficient or lost her patience or temper at the slightest difficulty. In many places today she cannot retain her position unless she is successful in passing her promotional examinations and that means that she must read, take courses, and study.

An elementary teacher in a large city said the other day that it was very hard to pay the increase in the cost of living out of her present salary. She is a woman of forty and is on her maximum salary which amounts to about twenty-three dollars a week. Her school is in a city district and for several years she has found it necessary to live in the vicinity as she did not like the wear of

the trip daily from the suburbs, and she could not live on a cold lunch. Until this year she has managed to scrape along on \$10 a week for room, table board, and laundry, but this year the same accommodations are costing her \$12. She only has a small bedroom which just barely holds a couch, bureau, table, two chairs and a small book-case—not nearly so good a room as many a maid has,—and it is one flight higher. Her meals are in a dining room in the house and while there is quite a good bill of fare, the quality of the food is far inferior to that in a private family. She does not have asparagus and strawberries in March and April, or fresh peas in May and June. After paying this weekly expense, she has left \$11 a week. Is that equal to the seven or eight that a maid gets? No indeed, for she has to go out in rain or shine and she is obliged to be well dressed all the time in order to set a good example to, and have an elevating influence on, the children. She cannot buy a ninety-eight cent dress and wear it nearly all the day, keeping her good clothes for evening or Thursday or Sunday. Then there are many calls for money in the school—to give receptions to parents, to help in the cases of need. She must buy books or she cannot keep up with the progress of the world. She is positively obliged to attend

some lectures, take some courses, and keep herself in touch with the world at all points. And when the doctor and the dentist send in their bills, it is a problem to know how to pay them. It is a wonder that she manages to keep along in a good, respectable place, and have proper clothes.

Of course the teacher in the high school receives more pay, but the demands on her time, strength, and money are greater. Under present conditions in most places, her total of work in school is longer by more than an hour and she only has fifteen or twenty minutes to snatch her lunch. She has more study, more courses, more marking of papers out of school. She must travel or she is not considered broadly educated. She must dress well, for her pupils are at the critical age. She must not protest at increased hours and no extra pay, for it is not considered professional and she ought to be ready to sacrifice herself for the good of the service.

Of course men in the same position get about double the pay that women do, but the wonder is that they are able to live in decent fashion, and bring up, dress, and educate their children. Not only does the man work hard, but his wife has even a harder life—especially in these days when they simply cannot afford to hire help at present wages. For

even women who go out by the day now want twenty cents an hour and their carfares, and men to fix the garden or clean up ask thirty cents an hour and take their time about it too.

At the present time in one of the large cities of the country—a city noted for its position in the educational world—the teachers face a very discouraging situation. A year ago they were warned that their salaries might be reduced, although such action might be avoided if they would take more hours of work and more pupils and economize on supplies. They were urged to show the true professional spirit and not protest. They complied, and now, when they present petitions for an increase in salary on account of the increased cost of living, the school board simply passes an order to have the petitions laid on the table and then promptly forgets them. And at the same time they read in the newspapers that the city budget for the fiscal year has been increased by over \$1,000,000 and that about \$400,000 of it is for increase of salaries, such as \$18 a week for street laborers and \$10 for scrubwomen. And while they are glad to see these people given something that approaches a living wage in these hard times, they are appalled at their own position. They are beginning to realize

that while much is expected of them in the way of preparedness, efficiency and devotion, they can expect little in the way of appreciation, recognition or compensation.

Another pertinent illustration of the low wages paid to teachers is found in Massachusetts, where the Teachers' Federation is asking for a law making the minimum wage \$500. In their report the following facts are cited: "During the past school year in towns having less than 5000 inhabitants, 1100 elementary school teachers received less than \$8.85 per week (52 weeks to the year), 934 less than \$8.50, 626 less than \$7.90, 411 less than \$7.50, 287 less than \$6.95, 53 less than \$5.98 and 10 received \$5.00 per week." And this same report notes that in "Jan. 1916 a decree of the Minimum Wage Commission went into effect making \$8.50 per week the minimum for experienced female employees of ordinary ability in retail stores in Massachusetts." It also quotes the statutes to show what is required of teachers, and one is appalled at the amount and variety of learning and training demanded. For instance they must be able to "give instruction in orthography, reading, writing, English language, grammar, geography, arithmetic, drawing, the history of the United States, physiology and hygiene and good behavior" and so on ad infinitum. If

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such preparation is compensated at present wages—below even the actual wage of many untrained workers, and far below such wage in proportion to training and efficiency, who in the future will be ready to spend years of study and work and devote time and strength to a profession that is so poorly paid and is evidently unappreciated?

IV.

CONSIDER ministers, doctors, lawyers. Where do they stand? Minister's salaries have not increased at all in the last twenty years—except in a few large city districts and it is very difficult for them to live and act as they should. People belong to churches but do not attend as they used to. This is due to many reasons. Many men and women are so tired from the strain of the week's work that they feel Sunday must be literally a day of rest. Others think it is their only chance for an outing in the fresh air and that is the best way to recuperate for the next week. The mad desire for amusement or excitement that pervades the race keeps many away. Some churches realize this and provide fine music, spectacular subjects for sermons, even moving pictures of Bible scenes to attract the people on Sunday, and all sorts of concerts, entertainments, fairs and clubs to reach them during the week. Some keep away from the churches because they really cannot stand the constant call for money not only for the minister's small salary but for missions, entertainments, and so on endlessly. The minister who does not cater to the social and entertaining side, faces empty pews and pretty soon an empty purse. The minister is tremendously underpaid for the position he

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fills and the service that is demanded of him. Even the rich men in his church when discussing an increase of salary will say, "Well, he knew when he took the place that the salary wasn't much. A minister expects to be poor." And those same men are often ignorant, uneducated men who, by some lucky stroke, some shady deal, or some unexpected demand for their particular output, have suddenly and unexpectedly become rich.

And the doctor? Well, he is a necessary expense to be sent for with great urgency when sickness comes, but to be the last one paid when the emergency is over and the bill comes in. All doctors say that the middle class people and even the poor pay their bills more promptly than the rich. It is nearly always the successful, prosperous, business man who thinks the doctor's bill is outrageously high, who thinks it is highway robbery for a doctor to charge \$3.00 a visit when he was only in the house fifteen minutes. This is the case if the doctor happens to belong to the middle class and lives in ordinary fashion; but if he is wealthy and lives in extravagant style, and charges from \$10 to \$50 for a call, then that same man expects to pay. The middle class doctor of today cannot charge any more than he did twenty years ago if he wants to get his bills paid—and even then he

frequently has to make a discount on large bills in order to collect them. And it is the same with the dentist, who finds gold, platinum, and other materials vastly higher in price and yet does not dare to charge his patients a proportional increase for fear of losing them entirely. And yet he has to pay maids more, to pay more for food, clothes—everything in fact that he pays is more. Everything that is paid to him is no more and often less.

And lawyers are suffering from the same situation. There are only two classes of lawyers today who are making money. One is the rich aristocrat with a large circle of wealthy acquaintances to draw on for practice, and even he makes a partnership with many other men of the same class and they have offices en suite—palatial and impressive—with many young men just out of the law school to do most of the work. They charge enormous fees, especially to the great corporations who control the world's industries, transportation, and finances. The other successful lawyer is the one that handles criminal business, who receives his pay in advance, who often knows very little law, spends no time in study on his cases, but rushes from one to another case and makes his money easily. But the lawyer without wealth or po-

sition, who does not like criminal work, gets cases from his own class largely, and today finds them in the same position as all the middle class—crushed between capital and labor—and unable even if not unwilling to pay as good fees as they did twenty years ago. Again it is the man who is making money fast, who has autos, a chauffeur, several maids, a summer residence, fine clothes, and everything to satisfy and amuse himself and his family—who exclaims at the size of the bill, wants it cut down, delays months about paying, grumbles about lawyers taking it easy in their offices and giving opinions or drawing up a few papers and then charging exorbitant fees. Yet he is the very man who wanted his business attended to immediately as it was very important and meant time and money to him.

There is still a class of widows and spinsters who live on the income of investments, and a very large number of such women are finding themselves in extremely straitened circumstances today and in a very different position from what they were twenty years ago or even five. Much of their railroad and brewery stock for instance is yielding very little, owing to mismanagement, government taxes and government investigation, or the fear of prohibition laws. And they cannot

live comfortably as they did, but are obliged to scrimp and save in order to live in decent quarters, have fair clothes, and feed themselves. They have cut out travel and amusements almost entirely. So they are discouraged and do not see much prosperity in such a situation.

V.

Now all this sounds exceedingly pessimistic—perhaps even untrue—in view of the constantly repeated statements of special commissions, the press, and speakers of both political parties in the recent campaign to the effect that never before has the United States been so prosperous and flourishing. What is the explanation? It seems to be the same story—that prosperity means big success—especially for the manufacturers in these war times when the demands in Europe exceed the supply in this country. Our exports have greatly increased in the last two years—and at first our imports decreased, but the official report of 1916 shows a steady and great increase in imports, although exports are still far in the lead. Bankers who have made great foreign loans have made millions and we now have a great supply of gold in the country. But the last report of the United States Treasury department shows tremendous increase in the national debt.

All this spells prosperity certainly—but not for the middle class. For whom, then? First of all for the wealthy class. They are making millions and spending money freely in all sorts of luxuries. And the mechanics and factory laborers also are more prosperous than ever. Their wages have more than dou-

bled in the last twenty years and their hours are shorter. Those who do manual labor—both skilled and unskilled workers—are making more than they ever did on account of their organization into unions, or on account of the great demand for such labor and the fact that so many foreigners who are employed in such labor have returned to Europe to fight for their country. But even between these two extremes of labor—the employer and the employee—which has the advantage in this era of prosperity? Here again it is the employer—for when he increases the wages of his laborers either because of scarcity of men or because of the demands of his laborers supported by labor unions, he immediately increases the price of his goods, and usually at a greater rate than the increase in wages warrants. So he is always ahead of the game, and talks loudly of the great prosperity of the country. What has put him into this position of absolute independence? It seems pretty plain that our “infant industries” have become giants through the protection of the high tariff in this country for the last fifty years and especially since 1890. At present the tariff is lower than it has been for years, but the war is even more protective than any act of Congress, for not only does it protect our industries so that manufacturers can set

their prices for this country, but it also gives them a chance to send goods out of the country. Now they have almost no competition from European goods and they reign supreme both here and abroad. We constantly hear that the high prices for living commodities in this country are due to shortage and that such shortage is due to the excessive exportations to Europe. Statements have been published from Americans in Europe, however, that American products raw and manufactured, sold at cheaper prices in Europe than here in the home country. If such is the fact, the situation is outrageous, and it seems as if the responsibility rested on this government—first, for special class legislation for so many years that these protected industries have become so powerful that they throttle the whole country, and second for allowing these industries to create a shortage in this country by sending abroad and then raising prices here. The present administration began its career with an attempt to bring to a normal, healthy condition the industries and finances of the country by the Underwood tariff bill and various financial measures. It was a brave attempt to attack the giants of commerce and finance who had been so strongly entrenched through so many years of favoring legislation. But the great world

war set at naught these attempts and out-balanced all their effects. Then what remains for the government to do? One thing ought to be done. Exports cannot be taxed, but they can be restricted. An embargo could be placed by Congress on the exportation of any goods from this country until the prices in this country had returned to normal rates—for instance until flour had dropped from \$12.00 a barrel to \$7.00 at least. For what always happens after a great increase in prices is this: Goods *never* go down to the price that they were before the increase. Since the anthracite coal strike, about 1903, coal has never returned to what were normal rates for years before that. It went up from \$5.00 as high as \$16.00 a ton, and it never went down below \$7.00 again. Did they increase the operatives' wages in that proportion, 40%? No, indeed—about 5%—10% only—but it offered a good excuse for raising the price. And so it is with everything. Thus what is called an era of prosperity means that the upper class increases its wealth and makes itself more secure and more powerful.

And the lower class? Well, it means an increase of wages to them—but that does not mean such an increase in comfort because the necessities of life are so increased in value. But strikes continue and they know their

power and they manage to keep on the same level and in some classes of labor to keep above the level. They are at work and they can get an increase in wages now and then, and for the time being they are encouraged. When they find their increase does not mean increase in purchasing power, then they renew their demands, and so the struggle goes on and on between capital and labor like an endless chain.

Here are some instances of increased wages to operatives gleaned from papers and magazines during the last few months, most of them given, according to the reports, without any pressure or strikes from the laborer. This sounds more magnanimous than it probably is, for it undoubtedly indicates such tremendous volume of business and incredible increase in profits that the employer hastens to raise the wages of his employees to head off any demands or strikes that would interfere with or delay his business at these golden moments which may pass all too soon.

But here are the figures. The United States Steel Co. has added \$20,000,000 to its annual pay roll. Not knowing the number of operatives employed or the ratio of distribution, it is impossible to estimate how much this means to the individual worker, but it is plainly significant of the prosperity of the

company. As the price of cotton has soared, New England cotton mill operatives have received a 19% increase. Some silk mills have increased wages 30%. The American Clothing Manufacturers' Association has given an increase of 35%. As a result small firms not members of the Association are forced to give the same or lose workmen, and that nearly nullifies their profits and may soon force them out of business. And so all along the lines of labor—among rubber workers, cement workers, coal miners, tanners, explosive makers and the like wages have been increased, and yet many of them find it hard to live.

(NOTE:—A recent magazine publishes the statement that this annual increase of \$20,000,000 of the payroll of the United States Steel Corporation affects 250,000 employees and is the third 10% increase of the year 1916. Just figure that out for yourself, and you will find that it does not sound so tremendous to the individual. And if that is the third 10% increase, you wonder if the operative starved in 1915, and if he still continued to in 1916.)

VI.

AND where is the middle class in this era of prosperity? It is being crushed between the other two classes. It has not yet disappeared, but if this struggle goes on, it will—and then the struggle between the two classes will assume a new phase.

When the age of great fortunes began in this country, the people of the middle class rejoiced. They liked to feel that we were getting on a par with the older nations, that they could not look down on us and laugh at our simple life, our lack of luxuries, our lack of culture. It was gratifying to have a leisure class with time and money to build great houses and adorn them with beautiful things purchased in the Old World—often times from those who had great estates, the prestige of family, and art treasures, but not money enough to keep up the position and luxury of the past. It made delightful reading when an American heiress married a European nobleman and carried her fortune—acquired in America—to enrich a European.

Then when great corporations were first organized, the middle class thought the problem solved, for goods and transportation were better and cheaper and it seemed as if this plan of great combination of capital was going to work for the advantage of all classes.

But when these corporations had driven all the small merchants, the little competitors, the middle class men, out of business by good products and low prices; then, secure in their position under favorable laws, they showed in their true light as giant monopolies which had the power to corner the market, hold back goods, create shortage, raise prices, lower wages, ruin competitors (if any were left), and make the people of the country depend on them for their very existence. For instance, when the coal strike was on, and people rushed for oil to burn in its stead, a great monopolizing oil company could raise oil one cent a gallon, and make an extra million or more in a week. Or when a great car company increased its dividends and cut down the wages of its employees at the same time, and dismissed those who dared utter a protest, no one was surprised when labor rebelled and caused one of the great strikes.

When the people of the middle class saw the frightful control of business and life that capitalists were gaining, when they realized what great fortunes were being made in this country to be squandered in Europe, their ideas and feelings began to change. At first they did not feel the effect on themselves so tremendously, but realized what it meant to the poorer classes. They sympathized with

the laborer and his family ground down by the iron heel of capital, and while they dreaded strikes, and their attendant privations and horrors, they aided and abetted him in his struggle for a living wage. They raised the wages of the few they employed, they organized charities, settlement work, and in many ways worked to improve the physical, moral, mental, and financial condition of the laboring class. They did not wish to see "labor crucified on a cross of gold."

But at last they have awaked to the bitter fact that they are the chief sufferers. They are not organized, they cannot strike and make demands for higher wages. They must be good, efficient workers or they cannot even retain the positions they have. They do not ask for more salary as they fear that the reply may be that somebody else can be found to do the same work at a cheaper rate. They begin to see that labor and capital have become two terrible, powerful monsters who will eventually devour them. When labor strikes and gets the higher wage, and capital raises prices, who suffers most? The answer is only too plain:—it is the middle class. Here is where they are today—between the upper and the nether mill-stones. They must pay twice what they did twenty years ago for all labor that they employ, they must

pay double and in some cases more than double for nearly all that they buy—and their incomes are either the same as they were twenty years ago or may possibly have increased about five per cent. Then how do they live? They do not live as well as they did twenty years ago—not only do they not spend money as freely and live as comfortably as they did then, but they have not retained their relative position between the upper and the lower classes.

Take for instance the example of clothes. A woman of the middle class with the same or slightly increased income cannot have as many clothes, or as well made, or of as good material, or as much like those of the rich woman as she could then. She either has to buy a very few nice things and wear them a long time even if they are out of fashion, or she can do as the poorer class does and buy cheap things that are pretty good imitations of the best, and wear them while they are in fashion and then get more of the same. But generally she has acquired tastes and habits that make her feel uncomfortable in cheap clothes so she buys the good ones and wears them long after they are out of style. She does not ask for gorgeous, magnificent creations such as her rich sister wears, but for good, well-made suits and gowns. But that

is really a small part of it. The food question is a great problem. Here again it is a matter of taste and habit. The people accustomed to sirloin steaks all their lives cannot enjoy the top of the round—although they may be forced to buy it. But as a general thing years of custom are too powerful and so they buy the sirloin, but buy less and have it less often. In the matter of amusements it is the same. The rich spend immense sums at the opera, the play, the symphony, great bazaars, etc., where prices are much higher than they were and where more elaborate dress is demanded and where everything is on a more lavish scale. The lower classes are amply provided for by the cheap movies, cheap vaudeville, and also by municipal concerts and entertainments generously given free by cities today. And where are the middle class? Usually at home. They cannot enjoy the cheap things and so stay away, and they can only afford the fine things (which they do enjoy) once in a while.

Apropos of the food question, a newspaper reporter recently interviewed a prominent federal investigator of the high cost of living and quoted him as saying, that housekeepers' and consumers' leagues must study the recent reports of the departments of Agriculture and Commerce and find out what eco-

nomical substitutes could be used for the ordinary foodstuffs that have recently increased in price and leave such for the more wealthy class. And for such valuable advice he undoubtedly will receive a large salary that will insure him the privilege of eating eggs, potatoes, and beef. Government investigations are apparently worthless and extremely costly. Witness the recent "leak" investigation which cost the government \$15,000 for one man's services for about a month and other expenses to over \$50,000 and the result was exactly the same as it always has been—the verdict that nobody in the government was in any way responsible. Do investigations ever end in any other way? The government has recently appropriated a vast sum to continue investigation of the high cost of living and the Secretary of Agriculture has announced to the country that it is a very essential thing to have a thorough investigation so that the government may have full information as to conditions in order to work out a just and economical basis of marketing. But the whole trend of the situation and the outcome of the prolonged investigation are distinctly foreshadowed in his further statements that there is no cause for hysteria because there is no shortage of food—except that wheat and potatoes were short last year,

—but that the chief solution is by the practise of household economies. He declares that as a nation we disdain to economize and that the waste in kitchens is enormous, that prices must remain at a "certain level" (probably he means high level) as farmers will not produce without the guarantee of a good profit. Can you not clearly foresee the report of the federal commission? And who are the sufferers? The middle class men and women who hold salaried positions in which wages have been increased very slightly or not at all for several years, and yet they are compelled to pay vastly increased prices to the manufacturer, farmer, laborer, and the government. The farmers now can come to town to buy automobiles at the Auto Show but the lawyer, teacher, salesman, and clerk are thankful if they can get a seat in an over-crowded public car. And it certainly does not augur well for the middle class, but seems to indicate that the time is near at hand when they must change their mode of living and the habits of a life time.

Many a woman who has kept a maid all her life now reaches middle age and finds that she cannot afford to pay for one, so hires a woman to wash and iron and occasionally sweep. And remember that same woman owns her own home and has not lost anything

that she had, her husband is not getting less salary or making less money, but his income has not increased to any extent and every expense in life is greater. Perhaps some one may say here that the price of gas has been reduced. Yes,—it is less per thousand, but the quality of it is so much poorer that the bills are higher. Tax rates are higher, or if they are lower, the assessed value is made higher and the tax bill grows. Taxes, state and national, bear most heavily on the people of the middle class. The middle class man on a known salary or with a few visible possessions is taxed for every cent he possesses, while the wealthy man can conceal his riches (although many states are now making laws to remedy this), and the poor man comes below the tax limit so anything he can save is accruing to his benefit. With the rich nothing matters much. They have always had everything and even if they do complain at income taxes and corporation taxes, they still have enough left to have luxuries and enjoyments. They always had horses, carriages, coachmen, and now have touring cars, runabouts, limousines, and chauffeur, and keep saddle horses and driving horses also to use at the country clubs and horse shows.

Of course some men of the middle class who once had a horse and carriage now have

an automobile of some description, but many a one does not, because he cannot afford it. A recent article in a Sunday newspaper on the excessive use of autos today stated that more mechanics had autos than men of the middle class as ministers, lawyers, dentists, clerks, salesmen. That is certainly true and on Saturday afternoons, Sundays, and holidays, the people who are traveling about are either the upper or the lower class. Watch the stream of autos along a great city boulevard and out through the parks on a fine day. Here are the luxurious limousines or magnificent touring cars of the rich, here the doctor's car, here the good cars belonging to the fairly prosperous man of the middle class, and here the cheaper car or the second hand, out-of-date car of the mechanic. Where are the poorer class? Why, they crowd the street cars, the harbor boats, on their way to magnificent parks, zoos, golf links, seashore reserves, bath houses, etc., that the city, state, and federal governments provide for them out of the revenue from property and income taxes. And the men, women, and children of the middle class sit on their piazzas and give thanks for the nice, comfortable houses they have to live in and pay taxes for. If in moments of weariness and depression they are tempted with a desire to go somewhere to see some-

thing, they face the mobs at the public places and on the cars, hang on to straps, fight their way to get a look at this or that, and return to their homes exhausted and disgusted and ready to stay at home on holidays in the future. And the next morning when they read in the paper of the numerous auto accidents they are quite reconciled to their lot in life, and on the next holiday console themselves by taking a quiet walk or reading, or some mild diversion of that sort.

But as they sit and think they wonder how long they can go on in this way—for the real truth is that the people of the middle class today are busily engaged in just “keeping up appearances,” that is in trying to appear to be living the same as they always have. How are they doing it? Apparently in two ways, and most people have to use both. First they save and are more careful of everything they use, eat, and wear; they economize on little things; they deny themselves luxuries and are sparing of even comforts; they cut out amusements almost entirely or limit themselves to a few that are really worth while, like hearing a famous pianist, a great actor or wonderful opera singer; they have to limit their giving in charity to cases that they really know about and are interested in personally. Although they would like to give to

many of the great world charities of today that appeal to them strongly and whose calls flood their mails, they have to resist in order to pay the butcher and the grocer. And so there is retrenchment all along the line, the kind that can be carried on for some time without being very noticeable. Then the other way is to draw on the savings of more prosperous years. But these are not large, and when invested with caution do not bring large returns, so they do not form an inexhaustible source of income, and if drawn on too heavily will soon disappear. So the problem remains and looms before the mind with ever increasing force. And the hope for different times—will it ever be realized? Who can tell! And yet on the surface this world of ours—away from the horror and death of the great war,—seems to be rushing on to newer and greater things with accelerating speed on the high waves of prosperity. But the depths are troubled. Surely no thinking person today can contemplate existing conditions without concern or look to the future without dread.

If the middle class is crushed as it has been in the earlier civilizations, and the lower class and the upper class contend without the middle class as a buffer—one of two things will result, or perhaps both in succession. The

power of a wealthy aristocracy has in many ages been tremendous and has first crushed out the middle class and then reduced the lower class to the lowest depths of servitude. Are we to become a "commonwealth of millionaires and beggars?" Possibly, but we must remember that the lower class is stronger by reason of education and organization than it has ever been before and will be augmented by the rank and file of the middle class. That may mean a labor war that will involve all the people of the country and all parts of the country, and be more disastrous, more devastating than any war we have yet witnessed, for it will not cease until one class has been wiped out of existence, until "Reversion" has dragged "Evolution in the mud," and the process of civilization begins again.

Is there not some solution by which the country may be saved this terrible loss? The anarchist, the socialist, the religious reformer, the political reformer, each has his scheme and his sphere of influence, but each one fails because he does not have a wide enough audience. It will probably take some terrible calamity, some awful lesson, to prove to all classes that this mad race for supremacy must stop; that classes must not stand so far apart; that one man cannot be allowed to live in idleness and luxury from the labor of

another man who spends his life in toil and want; that a quiet, simple life with comforts enjoyed by all, where justice and morality and good will prevail is better than this wild, ultra progressive life with its uneven distribution of material things, where corruption, immorality, and hate seem triumphant. Who can stop us from whirling through space until we dash to pieces on the rocks of progress and civilization? No one person, no one class. It can be accomplished only by the united, concentrated, self-sacrificing efforts of all men of all classes. And before the middle class is completely crushed it must act to save not only itself but all good things that the ages have brought to mankind. How can it be done and who will do it?

VII.

FOR the middle class to preserve itself seems to be the first step in the solution of the problem. As capital and labor have both organized, the middle class must do the same and do it immediately. Yet it is hard to say just what form such organization must take, for it cannot be on quite the same lines as the other two.

In this country the middle class forms nearly or quite one half of the population, with labor a close second, and capital a very small minority. Yet capital today rules the country; but labor can when it utilizes its strength, and it is beginning to realize the fact.

Teachers have been repeatedly urged to join the great Federation of Labor and add their numbers, influence, and knowledge to carrying on the struggle. They have not considered it professional, and so have held back. Another reason is that there are many women in this profession and just now many of them, especially in the East and South, are engaged in the contest for equal suffrage and equal pay for equal work, and until that is accomplished, they do not feel ready to form an organization in which all power would really rest with the men.

Here again, we are confronted with another problem, that of state rights and national

power. If we were fully and completely a nation, this difficulty would not be great. Congress can pass uniform naturalization and bankruptcy laws, and it ought to be able to pass national suffrage laws. An amendment has been made denying the right of any state to abridge suffrage "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Because that amendment has become a dead-letter on account of the hostility of its opponents and the quiescent forgetfulness of its former advocates, no argument exists to prevent another amendment to give suffrage to women in all the states. The women will see that it remains in force as other amendments have, except the fourteenth and fifteenth. Here is one important step to be taken. Make the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution to give the right of suffrage without regard to sex, and make it the eighteenth and not the nineteenth. Do not delay.

Then the middle class must organize by itself. Do not call it a corporation or a union, or a federation, but call it organized efficiency or the Order of Efficiency (to use a much abused word), in order to differentiate it from the two organizations already existing.

The members who compose the corporations have united to protect and increase their wealth,—wealth which in some cases has been

acquired by the individual himself either by brain power or hard work, dishonest deals or just a stroke of good luck (and the latter seems to cover most cases; for just as often as brains, work, or trickery has succeeded it has also failed), but in other cases has simply been passed on to him from other generations and has accumulated by its own power. The real, if not the avowed object of corporations, both private and public service, is to make money, not to give to the world the best product, the best service, the best wage possible. People have been inclined to admire the efficiency of great corporations—until suddenly some great investigation occurs and the whole world sees the most disastrous and dishonest inefficiency exposed, both in the general system and in the highly paid official.

Corporations have asked for and gained much favoring legislation, both state and federal. Their contributions to national political campaigns were simply enormous until forbidden by law. On the other hand in the matter of fair treatment to small competitors, employees, and the public, they have fought bitterly to prevent the passage of laws forbidding them to form trusts in restraint of trade or to give cheaper railroad rates to large than small producers, and requiring them to put safety appliances on trains, and many

other laws passed by Congress in the last thirty years. So this is the position of the union of capital, or corporations:—to amass fortunes and to oppose any legislation to prevent them from doing it in any way they please, regardless of the rest of the people.

Now look at the labor unions or federations. The same attitude confronts us, but calls for less condemnation and more sympathy. The man who has much, and fights the world for more and then more, has not as good an excuse for it as the man who has little or nothing and fights that he may have something for himself and family. The latter was true of the laborer, for wages were low and hours were long and he had neither time nor money to get any of the benefits of life. So he formed unions and made his demands backed by an organization that constantly grew in strength and numbers. But like the corporations, the unions have been wholly selfish in their demands and have placed the emphasis on money and *never* on efficiency. When demands for high wages or less hours have been resisted by the corporations, the unions have ordered a strike, frequently not only of the men affected, but also of other unions for a "sympathetic strike" without regard for the welfare and safety of the general public. The attitude toward the public has

been the same on the part of corporations and labor unions. Then again the labor unions have protested against any legislation to prevent them from carrying out their boycotts and strikes, and have resisted injunctions. In all laws against their operations they see oppression, and by threats and intimidation seek to procure favoring legislation. The last instance of their power as shown in obtaining the Adamson Law to prevent the threatened railroad strike, and the ensuing contest between the great railroad corporations and the powerful brotherhoods of labor, have filled the whole country with alarm.

Again—like the corporations—they want their price without regard to the value of their product. The unions demand uniform hours of labor and uniform wages for all members, whether the individual accomplishes much or little, good or bad. If approved by the union to which he belongs, it is almost out of the power of even great corporations to discharge an employee for inefficient or even bad service. A union carpenter has to be paid so much per day for work whether that work is satisfactory or not, whether he is an experienced or an inexperienced workman, and whether he performs a proper amount of labor in the given time.

VIII.

So there stands the middle class between the two extremes, and the situation seems to be "join or die." They must not die, for when once destroyed, it will take ages to raise them again as the bulwark of the nation. And if they are not to die, they must seek self-preservation by means of orders. But these orders to save themselves must be based on such principles of unselfishness and justice as to command the respect of all orders. First, they must form separate fraternities or groups of workers who are engaged in the same line of work, as teachers in one group, clerks in another, salesmen in another, lawyers in another, and so on. Then these must be federated into one great order.

Second, each group must fix standards for itself not only in regard to wage, but also in regard to service. In each group there will have to be sections or grades based on the character of the work to be performed, the amount of training necessary to prepare for the work, and the experience of the worker. Take for instance the educational group. Under present conditions of training and service, there should perhaps be five or six grades. In the first or lowest grade should come kindergarten teachers; in the second, the teachers of elementary schools; third, teachers of sec-

ondary schools; fourth, teachers in colleges; fifth, teachers of post graduate special courses as medicine, law, etc.; and possibly a sixth for expert state and federal supervision and suggestion. This classification is based on training, and grade of work. Even in these grades there would have to be some subdivision to recognize the difference between the directors of the grade and their assistants. This differentiation depends largely on experience.

Next, a minimum and a maximum wage for each position must be fixed by the group organization, such wage to depend on length of service. If conditions in the world as to the purchasing power of money vary, then salary rates should be changed to meet the new situation. What should be the basis of computation by which to fix the rate would certainly prove the most difficult of all propositions. Who is going to estimate the proportional value to the world of bankers, brokers, manufacturers, railroad officials, doctors, lawyers, teachers, salesmen, artisans, farmers, and unskilled laborers? That question looms large at present, but might be settled by a trying out process for a limited time, such process to be followed by arbitration or by referendum.

Next, a standard of efficiency must be set for the different grades in each group and

provisions made to enforce the standard. Of course it is more difficult in this order to measure the product than it is in some others. The efficiency of railroads can be measured by good service, elimination of accidents, etc.; manufacturers can set standards and refuse to allow on the market foods that are not pure and alloyed articles parading under the title of solid gold, etc.; trade unions can declare that if a man cannot make so many pairs of shoes in a day, he is not working up to the standard; but for the orders of the brain workers to measure the product of the work of the doctor, lawyer, or educator, is of course, more puzzling. But consensus of opinion will have to settle the matter.

Of course the great objection to this is what has always been urged and what has held back the middle class from organizing, and that is: that it destroys individualism and does not give the man of ability and force a chance to rise, and makes him a mere machine subject to the will of the organization. That may be true to a certain extent, but face the truth of present day conditions. Do ability and force always win in the struggle? Do you not frequently see inefficiency and bluff at the top, because of influence or luck or both? And in the educational group, salaries are already graded and uniform in the same town or city

for the same position regardless of the character and ability of the worker. The better are often under the control or direction of the poorer. And the wage rate is imposed from the outside by boards often not qualified to judge the situation at all. Would it not be a step towards greater freedom of the individual to put it within his power to fix in his own group, with the sanction of the order, his minimum and maximum wage rate, and his minimum of work. Maximum of work can never be fixed so long as people enter these professions with devotion and remain in them with zeal, as many do today in spite of the drawbacks and discouragements of their positions.

Does this seem visionary or impracticable? If so recall the small beginning of labor unions and corporations and then behold their immense proportions and power today. When seven clothing cutters in Philadelphia organized the Knights of Labor in 1869 do you suppose they had any conception of the great American Federation of Labor with its thousands of ramifications, that exists today? Did any one foresee the great financial control of the country by railroad and oil magnates when these corporations were formed? These examples prove that such organization is possible and that "in union there is strength."

But "Rome was not built in a day," they say, and this Order of Efficiency cannot spring up like a mushroom overnight. Time and thought are needed to bring it to perfection, therefore do not delay.

Then having formed this great Order of Efficiency with its subdivisions of groups, grades, and sections, and having arranged an equitable standard of wages, and a just basis of efficiency, let the members also seek to impress on the country at large the need of federal legislation to prevent great corporations from gaining control of the resources and the finances of the country to such an extent that they can create shortages, raise prices, and so oppress the laboring classes that in despair they resort to boycotts and strikes and refuse arbitration until the whole country is involved in an industrial war. To accomplish this, laws should be passed to limit capitalization and to fix a maximum of salary in these great industrial and financial organizations, and establish a maximum and also a minimum of allowable income for any individual of any class in order to prevent the people of the upper class from revelling in luxury, idleness, and amusement while the lower class starves or fights, and so between them crush the middle class between the upper and the nether mill-stones. Let the middle

class then awake to the situation not only for self-protection but to preserve in the world a government, of, by, and for the people.

The time has gone by when the people can be fooled with specious promises, acts of charity, amusements provided by the government, old age pensions and the like. They have had education enough to obtain a broader view of the right of the individual to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." They do not want the necessities of life or amusements or pensions that are doled out to them by a patronizing aristocracy of wealth or by a beneficent government whose favoring legislation has made possible this oligarchy. They demand the right to be paid in due proportion for their labor so that they can live decently, choose and pay for their own amusements, and be given a chance to provide means of existence when age has robbed them of the strength to labor. This is the true spirit of democracy and democracy cannot continue unless extreme measures are resorted to in order to establish and maintain a more uniform basis of life and labor for all the people of these United States of America.



SIMILAR CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND

The statements and predictions of this book have been startlingly verified since it went to press by the report of an American woman, Mrs. C. A. Robinson, who returned from England on the ship with Balfour. She says of conditions in England: "It is to be noticed, however, that in the increased cost of living, privations are felt to the greatest extent by the salaried class. These are clerks in offices, salesmen and salesgirls in stores, teachers in public schools, bank clerks In most cases their salaries have remained the same as in pre-war times, while the cost of living has more than doubled. In order to get cheaper house rent many have moved to suburban cities, but since January the railroad rates have increased 50 per cent. They absolutely do not know what to do and they begin to show that they are not having sufficient nourishing food. Then, too, it is a bitter humiliation for them to resort to the methods practiced by the lower classes of standing around the butcher shops late on a Saturday night to secure bones for soups and stews, to attend rummage sales to secure second-hand clothing. They simply cannot bring themselves to do it and so they are suffering in silence, making the best outside appearance possible, while within the privacy of their homes many have gone hungry and cold during the winter."

She also states that it is "quite the reverse with the laboring class," that they "never before in their lives handled so much money," that wages for manual labor are tremendously high, so that women who formerly earned seven shillings a week are now getting sixty to eighty shillings and this combined with the government's allowance (if their husbands are at the front), has led them into "waste and extravagance almost beyond belief." A London shopkeeper told her that practically his only customers last winter were women of this class who bought silks, velvets, and furs even to the cost of twenty-five and thirty pounds. She says that all are agreed that conditions can never be the same again "and that one of the greatest problems will be the adjustment of labor" after the war.

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